



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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read any books they like on the subject, but not use books in writing their papers. By this method of teaching the memory, the receptive power, the thought, and the power of reproduction are trained together. I have spoken against examinations, but I would exclude from reprobation the examinations set by the teacher to the class at the end of the Term. The preparation for this examination causes the pupil to view the period as a whole, and to arrange his knowledge in his head. The papers have then to be corrected. This must be done by the teacher himself. It is the only way to gain a real grasp of the minds of the class; the only way in which he can assure himself that he has not been talking over their heads. Of course it involves labour, but it is inevitable. I have tried delegating the work to a governess, and only looking over two or three myself, but I have never found this satisfactory.

The next point on which I should like to touch is the comparative value of Histories of different countries.

(To be continued.)

ON A CLASSICAL EDUCATION.

BY CHARLES D. OLIVE, M.A.

(Continued from page 159.)

BUT, someone will say, can the power of *reasoning* be better taught by anything than by *mathematics*? Perhaps not; but pure reason is not everything. I myself want something more. Mathematics are so cold! so intangible! so unsympathetic! so inhuman! They are a valuable aid—invaluable—but for pity's sake do not make them the main basis of instruction.

A man whose education has been altogether void of mathematics is a very incomplete one-sided creature. Those who are unfamiliar with arithmetic must find themselves in constant difficulties as they go through life. A man who has had no insight into algebra has lost the opportunity for a vast amount of great and varied pleasure. And there is probably nothing better fitted to give a training in strict logical accuracy than the study of Euclid. But beyond this?

I know that higher mathematics are absolutely necessary for astronomers, engineers, and men of many other professions. But it has always seemed to me that men who have studied the science of mathematics deeply as *an end* in itself, and have not afterwards humanized their knowledge by applying it to some useful purpose—kindling new light to illumine human ignorance—are apt to be uninteresting and uninterested people. I have hitherto kept this opinion to myself for fear of seeming to talk intellectual heresy. But a recent episode has induced me to speak out.

Just when I had begun to write this paper I was invited to an "at home," given by an American authoress, in the inn parlour of a remote country village, where we had gone to rest after the bustle of the Jubilee. We were given to understand that all the company—except ourselves and the parson—would be literary, the ladies for the most part

poetesses. Naturally I went in a docile frame of mind, bent on learning something. On entering I found myself wedged tight against the wall, with a piano on one side and a tall fair lady (presumably a poetess) on the other. I had not been introduced, but with the usual grace of her sex (and her profession) she began at once to let me talk to her. I had expected of course to talk poetry, but this was not to be. Gathering somehow that I was a schoolmaster, she plunged at once into an earnest rhapsody as follows: "Oh! I do hope you don't teach your boys nothing but mathematics! Mathematics make people so stupid! My boy used to be very fair at Latin. I learnt it myself on purpose to teach him; and so good at French—he talked it as easily as English. But for the last few years he has done nothing but mathematics; and now he seems to take no interest in *anything*. He has forgotten all his Latin, and cannot understand his sisters if they address the simplest remark to him in French. I am sure it is all those dreadful mathematics!" Of course a single instance such as this proves nothing. But all experience is made up of single instances: and it was at least a curious confirmation from a perfect stranger of a belief that I had been formulating just before.

For myself I will confess that mathematical and other abstract scientific truths have little charm for me. I do not care to know that the sun is ninety million miles away from us, and that in forty thousand years his disc will be two thousand miles less in diameter than it is to-day. These are interesting and indeed stupendous facts; but I do not care for them so much as I care to hear what men and women of like passion with ourselves thought and did in the far back ages when the world was young. Such facts may be of use, may be perhaps invaluable for after generations, when flying machines shall have become realities and Mars have yielded up the mystery of his twin canals. But for an ordinary work-a-day mind they are too stupendous—too hard to grasp. We cannot all be inventors, astronomers, engineers or chemists. We want an education for the average intelligent person whose lot in life will be to work at some ordinary occupation not requiring unusual ability, and to gather what may be of happiness by the way. If you will pause to think of it, we are most of us ordinary people of average intelligence.

The men of real genius, who are destined to become world-renowned astronomers or engineers, will of themselves find out their own special bents, and no conceivable mistakes in education will divert them. And all will surely find their work the easier if they have beforehand gained a mastery over language. For language is by far the most human of all sciences. It deals with words first and then with more than words. For by words we have revealed to us the thoughts and feelings of other men and women. By words we know and realize their hopes and fears, their doubts and their beliefs, their desires and aspirations. By words that tell of deeds we have quickened within us that sympathy with one another, which is one of the highest moral forces of our nature.

This brings me to another common war-cry of new educationists: "You classical men deal entirely with words: we want our children to know not words, but things."

In answer to this, I say we do *not* deal with mere words and nothing else. But we aim at teaching our pupils by means of words to apprehend things. How can you deal with things comprehensively without the help of words? Do you remember the account in *Gulliver's Travels* of the scientific set in Laputa—that wonderful land of flappers and projectors—who, on somewhat different principles, refrained from using words at all, and carried bundles of all conceivable things upon their backs with which they conversed without speaking? "The other project," he writes, "was a scheme for entirely abolishing all words whatsoever; and this was urged as a great advantage in point of health as well as brevity. For it is plain that every word we speak is, in some degree, a diminution of our lungs by corrosion, and consequently contributes to the shortening of our lives. An expedient was therefore offered, that since words are only names for things, it would be more convenient for all men to carry about them such things as were necessary to express the particular business they are to discourse on. And this invention would certainly have taken place, to the great ease as well as health of the subject, if the women, in conjunction with the vulgar and illiterate, had not threatened to raise a rebellion, unless they might be allowed the liberty to speak with their tongues after the manner of their forefathers; such

constant irreconcilable enemies to science are the common people."

And then the literature of Greece and Rome! you cannot dissociate the language from the literature. As the stories of old days unfold themselves, we introduce our children, one by one, to some of the noblest men and women who ever lived. Aristides, Socrates, Scipio and Cornelia—to name a few. From the lives of men like these what lessons can be daily drawn! what awful warnings from the sad histories of men like Themistocles and Pausanias!

What lessons in generalship from Caesar and Xenophon! and what extraordinary examples of modesty and self-effacement have ye in each of these two soldier authors! It is hard to realize that the hand which writes so dispassionately what Caesar said and did, what Xenophon said and did, is in each case the guiding master hand that did the deeds and made the history!

And, to touch a lighter vein, what lessons are to be learnt—over and above the Latin—from Ovid's poems! as his beautiful self-satisfaction and conceit unfold themselves, what warnings for any and everyone who may at any time be tempted to strive after the laurels of a minor poet!

But men are asking now, and have been asking for some few years past, why *two* dead languages? Would not *one* be enough for mental training? *either* Latin *or* Greek? Perhaps *one* would be enough, but two are better. If one is crowded out by the multiplicity of new subjects which our children have to learn to keep pace with the many inventions of this wonderful age, if only one is left, the one to be retained, we confess it sadly, must be Latin. Latin is more formal, more exact, and so a better vehicle for accurate instruction than Greek. There is such a wonderful and beautiful laxity about Greek. Besides all or almost all the constructions found in Latin most of our common English constructions are admissible: final infinitives, for example—each one a deadly sin in *Latin* prose.

There is a characteristic story of the late professor Shilleto. He underscored with his pencil a sentence in a piece of Greek prose which an undergraduate had brought him for correction. "Is it not Greek, sir?" asked the disappointed youth. "I cannot say," replied the professor, "that it is *not*

Greek; for there is such a beautiful laxity about the Greek language, that if you were to take all the words of this piece and put them into a bag, each on a separate bit of paper and shake them up, and draw them out one by one and write them down, I should be afraid to say that the result would not be Greek." The professor's answer must be taken with a large grain of salt, but it is instructive.

If only *one* dead language it must, I fear, be Latin: Latin, the mother of the Romance languages—the subsoil of a large part of our own. To one who knows Latin, the task of learning French, Italian, Spanish or Portuguese is more than halved. Yet Greek is so beautiful—so beautiful as a language—so beautiful in its literature: let us keep it as a luxury if it be not an absolute necessity. I read somewhere a sort of parody in Greek on a conversation between a boy and his schoolmaster, beginning thus: "Why, O master, are we forced to learn this Greek tongue, which is no longer spoken, as we learn it, anywhere on earth?" "Because, O boy, we wish you to become not shopkeepers, but gentlemen." The answer will be perhaps objectionable to some at this democratic end of the nineteenth century, but it contains a germ of truth which I need not help you to digest.

But it is sometimes said, few boys get so far with Latin—fewer still with Greek—as to appreciate the literature. Canon Lyttelton, in the same essay quoted before, has lately admitted this: "People go on defending it (*i.e.*, Latin)," he writes, "as if it could turn business men into *littérateurs*: it can do and has done nothing of the kind; but it is an unrivalled instrument for stimulating the reasoning faculties at an age in which their very existence might almost seem open to doubt." And again, writing still of classics: "They are for all boys a gymnastic of the very best kind, and for the select minority they are a great deal more." Even granting, as Canon Lyttelton here does, the unrivalled power of classics for developing the intelligence, I confess that it would take more than half the heart out of me for my work if I thought that this was all—that for the majority of boys Latin and Greek were only the best kind of "mental gymnastics."

I believe that if the teaching power is not absolutely wasted, most boys can and do get some insight into the literary beauties of these old languages. It is a big "if." I am

afraid that in the past a great deal of teaching power has undoubtedly been wasted; or sometimes even that the would-be teacher's latent teaching power has never been developed, or not till after many years of vain experiments, with the natural result that his would-be pupils have not been really taught. But I believe, too, and will ask you to believe, that this waste of power is less now than at any previous period of this century, thanks chiefly to the present wide-spread revival of interest in education, an interest of which the very existence of this great society, still more its rapid growth, is an amazing proof. And I believe that in the not far distant future such failures will become still more unfrequent if it can be secured, as many of us hope it shortly will, that all would-be secondary teachers before embarking on the office of schoolmaster shall—over and above their general education—undergo some special training in the art of teaching.

EYESIGHT IN CHILDREN.

BY G. B. BATTEN, M.D.

ALL around us in the universe are certain forces and certain forms of matter. We know about these only by impressions received through our various senses and carried by the nerves of sensation to our brains. There may be, nay, surely there must be forces and forms of matter in the universe of which we know nothing, simply because we have no sense organs by which we can receive impressions from them.

The eye is the organ by which we receive impressions of light, some of it coming possibly from a few inches from us, some of it from stars billions of miles away.

Now, what is light? Light is a form of radiant energy which travels through the luminiferous ether in the form of very small waves, the waves being at right angles to the line in which they travel; so although thirty years ago, that brilliant genius, Professor Clarke Maxwell, prophesied that all forms of radiant energy would be found to be magneto-electrical perturbations of the ether, it was not until the last few years that we knew of the existence of any other forms of radiant except heat, light and actinic or chemical energy. We are now able by electrical and other means to make out all sorts of forms of radiant energy of all sorts of wave lengths, from the huge magneto-electrical waves received from the sun, which are hundreds of miles long, up to smaller and smaller electrical waves right up to the smallest we have as yet perceived electrically—about $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch long; through a gap where there are waves which we know nothing about, up to the largest kind of heat waves, which are, however, not quite $\frac{1}{1000}$ -inch long; through smaller heat waves, up to the various kinds of light waves, from the longest or red ones through smaller actinic or chemical energy waves, on which photographers chiefly rely, up through another gap to the mysterious and probably infinitesimally small waves called "X" rays, which have such wonderful penetrative powers.